A REVIEW OF THE STATE OF THE BRITISH NATION.

Saturday, June 14. 1707.

I Have been ſtating the Caſe of the Difficulty rais'd between the Kingdoms about Trade, and the Frauds put upon us in *England*, under Colour of the Union; the Eſſays made to reſtrain them, and the Clamour at it.

I have diſtinguiſhed between the Encroachers upon Trade, and the Noiſe they make, and the juſt Claim of the *Scots* to a free Trade; and really, Gentlemen,—'tis the Want of thus diſtinguiſhing makes all our Uneaſineſſes in this Caſe— No doubt, thoſe, that are pinch'd here, cry out the *Union*, the *Union*, tho' the Buſineſs is *Diana, Diana*; our Wine and Brandy is in Danger, and the Union is the Colour.

The *Scots* are the beſt Explainers of this, ask them a few Queſtions.

Queſt. What is it, Gentlemen, you deſire?

Anſw. A Freedom to carry our Goods into *England* according to the 4*th* Article of the Treaty, which grants *Scotland a free Intercourſe of Trade*.

Queſt. Well, but here are a World of Goods brought in by other People, on purpoſe to defraud the Government; what will you do with them, will you protect them under the Pretence of the Union, and call them yours?

Anſw. No, not we; allow the proper Goods of *Scots* Men, and we have all we demand; for the reſt, do as the Laws of *England* direct, we are content, we do not deſire *England* ſhould be abus'd, much leſs will we encourage it.

This, I aſſure you, is now the common Language of *Scotland*, and I can ſee no Reaſon to object againſt it on any Account, whatever my own Opinion is in the Caſe.

I come now to the chief and most essential Fraud, and which indeed I meet with no Body in the *North*, but what crys out upon it as a horrible and unsufferable Cheat, and every Body is willing here to have it recover'd and redress'd, and this is the Drawbacks, than which I know no greater or more barefaced Cheat ever practiled with Impunity in any Nation in the World.

The Tobacco, which paying a great Duty of near 6 *d. per* Pound in *England*, is one of the best and most Capital Articles of the *English* Customs, has yet to encourage Trade, encrease the Consumption, support and enlarge our Plantations, and enable the Merchant to export it again into foreign Parts, a Law made to repay the Exporter all the said Duty, except about one Halfpeny *per* Pound— The Exporter, as far as possible, both by Bond and Oath to secure the Government, that the said Tobacco so exported, and on which such Allowance is made, shall not be relanded again into *England* or *Wales*.

Upon the Union, and the lifteral Sence of the free Intercourse of Trade mention'd in the 4*th* Article, a vast Quantity of this Tobacco is exported from *England* to *Scotland*, Debentures granted to the Exporter for drawing back the Duty as above, *as exported to a foreign Country*; so far 'tis regular.

In the Juncture of this Exportation, this foreign Country, *call'd Scotland*, by the intervening Accident of the Union, becomes the same Home-Country with *England*, and is now become *but one Britain*; by which Union, and a Capitulation for a free Intercourse of Commerce, the Tobbacco so exported is really at Home again, *that is*, free to be carry'd from Place to Place throughout *Britain*, without Interruption, without Payment or Demand.

This is *the Letter* of the Union, *as I call it*, and as in general Prospect it has been construed to be—This is what the Merchant sets up as a *Non obstante*, to the Oaths and Bonds of the Exportation——And by this they claim to bring the same Tobacco back again to the Place from whence it came, and so meerly pick the QUEEN's Pocket of the 5*d. per* Pound drawn back by Debenture—On Pretence of the Union.

The Fraud of this has the particular Circumstance of being very open and barefac'd, and has the Happiness of being so manifest a Cheat, that even the Actors in it acknowledge it to be a Fraud.

Pray, Gentlemen, let me ask one Question here; do you think, the *Scots* will be uneasie at any Endeavours in *England* to prevent this Mischief? Do you believe *Scotland* will concern it self at all to protect this Abuse?

Indeed, whoever entertains such an Opinion of our *Northern Britain*, do them a great Deal of Wrong; they are are far from desiring, any thing so hard should be put upon *England* under Shelter of their Articles, and they exclaim as loudly at the notorious Fraud, as any Body can do in *London*.

Had an Act been offer'd to restrain that Liberty in the Parliament of *Scotland* before their Dissolution, I dare say, it would have met with a ready Compliance; and had the *English* Parliament made an Act separately for the Restraint of this Abuse, there would hardly have been one Mouth opened against it in all *Scotland*.

Nor, Gentlemen, are the *Scots* Properties at all concern'd here; for no Man can, in the ordinary Course of Trade, have sent for Tobacco's from *England* for their Use in such Quantities, as are apparently carry'd thither; 10000 Hogsheads of Tobacco are not sent to *Scotland* to be expended there, and the ordinary Course of Trade was only for the common Expence there; the Property of *Scots* Men therefore cannot be concern'd in this, since what is expended in *Scotland*, can by no means be Part of the Fraud, 'tis only what is sent back again into *England*.

This Fraud has two other Mischiefs in it. *First*, if it must be expended in *Scotland*, 'tis so much above the Expence of *Scotland*, that the Price there must sink, and so injure the fair Trader, who purchased purely for the common Course of Trade; and *secondly*, if it goes back to *England*, the QUEEN is not only abus'd and cheated of the Customs; but the Merchants who have Tobacco's in *England* before, are undersold

ſold by theſe Re-importers, and the Market conſequently ſunk, and ſo the fair Traders are under an inevitable Loſs.

I confeſs, I did not foreſee all this Myſtery of Miſchief, and once was of the Opinion, the Advantage of ſhipping Tobacco was upon the Square, and propos'd an Eſſay of that Nature to a Friend; and I note it here, that I may not be charg'd with writing againſt what I propos'd my ſelf—But I ſoon ſaw farther into it, and have ſince declined ſeveral Offers of being concern'd in it, as a thing contrary to all Manner of Honeſty and fair Trading.

But my preſent Deſign of mentioning this Caſe is, to aſſure the World, *Scotland once ſo called*, has very little if any Concern in this Cheat; they univerſally cry out, it ought to be detected, and they are content with any Methods, that can be legally found out for the preventing it.

I could deſcend here to ſome Steps, which might yet be taken to diſappoint that complicated Fraud; but I am not called here to give Schemes for the Duty of thoſe Offices, I doubt not, ſome Method will be thought upon to prevent it yet, and the true Intent and Meaning of the Union entirely preſerv'd.

It is a Scandal upon the *Scots* to charge the Frauds and Subtilties of tricking Merchants upon their Nation and the Union; they ſeek and they claim all the juſt Advantages of a free Intercourſe of Trade, and they ought to have them, and they muſt have them; but when, Gentlemen, you of the *South* come in with your Cuſtom-houſe Frauds, and the Leger-de-main of Trade, when you put the Dice upon your Neighbours, and cheat the QUEEN under their Names, do not be angry, if I tell you plainly, the Cheat is all your own, and they have no hand it, and do not blame them, if they diſown it, and you in it; if they inſiſt upon the Union being conſtrued to protect you, and fairly quit you to the common Juſtice of the Law; indeed, indeed, you can expect no other.

O but the Union! —Then crys the High-Flying Merchant, who perhaps having curſt the Union a thouſand times before, and flown in the Face of his Maſters, as well as of his Neighbours upon that Account—Now is for having it protect him; in abuſing his Soveraign and cheating both Nations. *O the Union!* ſays he, *the Union is broke.*

Truly, Gentlemen, you have been the firſt Invaders of the Union, in making it a Colour, a Cloak, under the Shelter whereof to abuſe your Country; it was never the Deſign of either Nation, that the Union ſhould be a Protection to Frauds, that it ſhould be the Foundation of deſtroying Trade, injuring the Merchant, and cheating the QUEEN; neither ſide had any View of this in the Union, and therefore thoſe Gentlemen, who taking Advantage of a litteral Conſtruction of Words, have invaded the true Intent and Meaning of the Union; theſe have broke the Articles, if they are broke at all, and without doubt the QUEEN has an equitable Right to claim, or in the Language of the Law, Her Majeſty may have Relief in Chancery againſt them, and I muſt own, I think, the Methods of preventing the Miſchief are ſtill very plain and eaſie; *of which hereafter.*

I muſt be allow'd therefore to think, the Diſtinction here very uſeful; The Caſe of the Drawbacks is quite different from the Importation of *French* Goods, and I need not go back to deſcribe them, the Property of native *Scots* is concern'd in one, and I could heartily wiſh, to avoid Clamours and Claſhings, that Caſe were entirely left, of which I have been particular enough; but in this the *Scots* are not at all concern'd, nor the Union; the Fraud is our own, practiſed by our ſelves upon our ſelves, and as the Deſert does not affect them, neither will the Remedy.

If the *Scots* are any way affronted here, it is at the Actors, and they ought really to reſent it, that any Body ſhould practiſe a Trade ſo openly immoral, and of which they make their Profits perfectly remote from them, *for the Gain is wholly out of the* Engliſh *Cuſtoms*, and then call it all by their Neighbours Name; 'tis like getting a Wench with Child, and then lay the Baſtard at another Man's Door; 'tis like robbing a Houſe, and then cry ſtop Thief; in this the *Scots* are eminently abus'd, the Union made a *Stale*, a meer ſtalking-Horſe, to

cover

cover and conceal the moſt notorious Abuſe —The Union is the Stage, and the Merchant the Mountebank.

Aſſure your ſelves therefore, Gentlemen, whatever Methods, legal Ones I mean, *and I am ſatisfy'd the Government will uſe no other*, are taken to put a Cheque upon this Fraud, whatever juſt Steps are taken to ſecure the Revenue from this open and bareface'd Depredation, I mean of Tobacco's; the *Scots* will be ſo far from eſteeming it an Infraction of the Union, that they will rather aſſiſt you in it, and be pleas'd, that the World ſhould vindicate them from being either Actors, Abettors, or any way concern'd in making ſo baſe an Improvement of ſo honourable a Treaty, as that of the Union.

I might have entred here upon a third Fraud, and that is of importing into *Scotland*, in the Interval, we are ſpeaking of, ſuch Goods as are not only prohibited upon the Account of the War with *France*, which is only a caſual and a temporary Prohibition, and ſuch a Prohibition, as perhaps were better taken off than continued; for I cannot help ſaying, the Prohibition of Trade with *France* has been and ſtill is our Diſadvantage, tho' I am not to be underſtood, that it has been always ſo; of which in my next: But I ſay, this third Fraud conſiſts in importing ſuch Goods, as are under a ſettled eſtabliſh'd Prohibition, for being deſtructive to our own Manufacture, and interfering with that great National Concern, as to Trade, Conſumption of our Produce, and Employment of the Poor of which I ſhall be particular in my next.

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